

Mafia Wiretap Uncovers Murder, Extortion, Bribes

'Sam the Plumber' Lets Worms Out of the Can

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following report on a rare journey behind the veil of organized crime was written by Associated Press writers Bernard Gavzer, Michael J. Sniffen and Don Battle, who compiled the excerpts from a 2,000-page transcript.

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — A reputed Mafia chieftain has opened the door to a glimpse of the daily operations of organized crime — involving murder, alleged political and police deals, labor racketeering and extortion.

The central figure in 2,000 pages of once-secret FBI transcripts from nearly four years of hidden electronic bugging is Samuel "Sam the Plumber" DeCavalcante, a 56-year-old heating and plumbing contractor with a home in Princeton, N.J., and—says the FBI—a long pedigree as a Mafia stalwart.

The listening devices were tuned in on places frequented by De Cavalcante. The transcripts came to light last week during a court case involving him.

A Justice Department spokesman called the transcripts the greatest revelation on organized crime since the testimony of Joseph Valachi.

OF MANY THINGS

De Cavalcante and his associates, said the FBI transcript, talked of many things, including:

—Eight murders, critically analyzed as to technique and the need for a machine to dispose of victims, such as one to turn them into "meatballs." It was concluded that executing a mobster who had fallen from favor in a public place, such as the way New Jersey mobster Willie Moretti was shot to death in a Cliffside Park, N.J., restaurant, "disgraced" the victim and hurt the Mafia image. "It leaves a bad taste," De Cavalcante is quoted as saying. "We're out to protect people."

—Alleged deals and connections with politicians and police, including an episode in which Thomas Dunn, now mayor of Elizabeth, N.J., received a cash campaign contribution from De Cavalcante. DeCavalcante is quoted "... I wish you a lot of luck. Can you use this in your campaign?" and Dunn replies:

"You get I can use it." Dunn denied any impropriety and said the contribution was a bit more than \$100).

—Handling the law, discussed by Anthony "Tony Boy" Boiardo of Essex Fells, N.J., in a Feb. 23, 1963, conversation with "Sam the Plumber." The transcript quotes Boiardo: "The only guy I handle is Dick Gino (Farina) and them guys handle the rest of the law." "Dick's" last name is blotted from the record.

UNION CHICANERY

—Strategy to be used in setting up pushover unions to pocket dues from workers and at the same time get kickbacks from employers by guaranteeing sweetheart contracts. DeCavalcante: "Well, you have to organize the plant so nobody walks in there. Then you wind up with the dues every month. That's \$300 a month..." Gaetano ((Corky)) Vastola, a DeCavalcante associate, said he would tell an employer "first what it's gonna cost—then how much I'm gonna save him by walking away" after getting a payoff of half the annual cost.

A legal move by DeCavalcante himself pried open the secret FBI eavesdropping transcripts.

Faced with an extortion conspiracy indictment in connection with a Philadelphia dice game in 1966, DeCavalcante, through his lawyers, asked for full disclosure of FBI eavesdropping material on him. A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision gave defendants the right of access to such material.

The lawyers hoped to find that the indictment was based on

illegal bugging and was thus invalid. However, the electronic surveillance covered a period from 1962 to 1965, ending before the Philadelphia incident.

Besides recording raw dialogue, the FBI also provided interpretations of hundreds of conversations, prepared in memo form for J. Edgar Hoover, FBI director. These memos indicated DeCavalcante has his own Mafia "family"—as the hoodlum subdivisions are known.

Here are some key sections from the 2,000 page, 13-volume transcripts:

MURDERS

The FBI report on a Feb. 23, 1963 conversation between Anthony Boiardo, DeCavalcante, Louis Larasso and Angelo "Ray" Decarlo states:

"The conversation drifted to a discussion of the recent killing of 'Cadillac' Charlie" in Youngstown, Ohio. All were critical of the method used and of the fact that his 4-year-old son was also killed. DeCarlo stated that as a result the word had been passed that no 'hand grenades' will be used in the future. DeCarlo further suggested that the best way to dispose of someone is to give the individual a fatal shot of dope and put him behind the wheel of his automobile where he will be found.

"DeCarlo: That's what they should have done with Willie (Moretti).

"Boiardo: Oh yeah.

"DeCarlo: You got five guys there, you talk to the guy. Tell him this is the lie detector stuff (truth serum). You tell him, 'You say you didn't say this...'

"Boiardo: How many guys are you going to con?

"DeCarlo: Well, if you don't con him then tell him. Now like you got four or five guys in the room. You know they're going to kill you. They say, 'Tony Boy wants to shoot you in the head and leave you in the street or would you rather take this, we put you behind your wheel, we don't have to embarrass your family or nothing.' That's what they should have done to Willie.

"Boiardo: How about the time

we hit the Little Jew.

"DeCarlo: As little as they are they struggle.

'8 SHOTS IN THE HEAD'

"Boiardo: The Boot (Ruggiero Boiardo, the speaker's father) hit him with a hammer. The guy goes down and he comes up. So I got a crowbar this big, Ray. Eight shots in the head. What do you think he finally did to me? He spit at me and said, 'You (obscenity).'

"DeCarlo: They're fighting for their life.

Referring later to the Moretti murder in a restaurant, the transcript says:

"DeCarlo: Sure, that man should never have been disgraced like that.

"DeCavalcante: It leaves a

bad taste. We're out to protect people."

On Sept. 10, 1964, the FBI sent this digest of a bugged conversation to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover:

"NK2461-C (code for the electronic bug at DeCavalcante's office) advised that subject (DeCavalcante) and two unknown males on Sept. 3, 1964, discussed the various types of machines suitable for disposing of a body. One machine was mentioned as being capable of turning a body into 'meatball.'

"One unknown male said the best machine was that which smashed up automobiles. Subject however said he was looking for the type of machine which pulverizes garbage. The unknown male stated the only type 'we' know of that will pulverize garbage is the machine Louise (Larasso) told the unknown males about the other day, and added, 'They're working on it now.'

There was an occasion in June, 1965, when Sam was consulted about a proposition to burn down a restaurant whose owner wanted to collect \$90,000 insurance. The owner, said the transcript, owed \$1,300 to the DeCavalcante family. The FBI memo in this episode states that a man "named Bob related that Joe wants to burn his restaurant

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down to collect the insurance." Joe was referred to as Joe Maglie and further identified as Joseph Migliazza.

"Bobby: Mr. Maglie wants to burn down his joint and I got the guy.

"Sam: Who's the guy?

"Bobby: Russ ... as far as Pussy's (Anthony Russo) concerned ... he says 'okay.' It's up to you now.

"Sam: What's he want to pay for it?

"Bobby: He's gonna pay \$5,000. That's all—I'll give him a break. He's got \$90,000 insurance on it.

"Sam: I don't even know nothing.

"Bobby: Okay. Done—okay.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS

The most often mentioned public official was Dunn, who was fighting for the mayoral post in October, 1964 when he was ushered into DeCavalcante's office. The Mafia kingpin introduced the politician as the next mayor of Elizabeth and was quoted as offering him "unlimited assistance" to his campaign and asking: "Do you think we could get any city work?"

"Well maybe," Dunn was quoted as saying.

Dunn complained to 'Sammy' of campaign charges that he was connected with gambling interests.

Dunn: "If you have any way of getting to Magnolia and LaCorte tell them to keep their lousy mouths shut. Because you know better than I do that I have no ..."

The mayor apparently referred to present State Sen. Nicholas S. LaCorte, his Republican mayoral opponent five years ago, and to LaCorte's 1964 aide, Michael J. Magnolia, now

Union County superintendent of public works.

Dunn: Because this thing could cream me at the last minute. So if you can in some way get to these two guys—to tell them to keep this thing out of the papers."

In a side remark, the FBI commented: "From their discussion it appears that Dunn and his opponent had previously agreed not to bring up certain past deeds which could be harmful to them."

On Feb. 2, 1965, the transcript talks of the government's efforts to deport Emmanuel Riggi of Linden, N.J.

AWARE OF TROUBLES

"Joe Zicarelli was aware of Riggi's troubles, having heard of them previously from DeCavalcante," the transcript stated. "In fact, he was able to report that, at DeCavalcante's request, he had spoken on Riggi's behalf to 'my friend the Congressman (Rep. Cornelius Gallagher)."

"Zicarelli indicated that he would follow the matter and said he was sure Gallagher could help if all else failed," the FBI commented.

Zicarelli suggested to Riggi, "There are three or four federal judges from Hudson County, N.J., that either he Zicarelli or Ray Angelo 'Gyp' DeCarlo could go to as a last resort."

"Zicarelli felt that the best course of action at this time would be for him to contact 'Neil, the Congressman' (Gallagher). He said he would alert Neil to the problem and if the case ever gets to Washington he would be in a position to get a favorable ruling."

Gallagher said no one ever contacted him about Riggi and there was no reference to Riggi in his files. The congressman

previously acknowledged talking to Zicarelli over the telephone about getting Zicarelli's son into medical school.

The FBI reports that DeCavalcante controlled at least one labor union position, in Hod Carriers Union Local 394. The FBI summary of bugging at DeCavalcante's office on June 3, 1965 reports:

"Sam DeCavalcante, in a discussion with his business partner, Larry Wolfson, said he intends to replace Joe Sferra as business agent of Local 394. He said Joe has held the position for about five years and during that time has annoyed him frequently. Larry noted that Joe was recently re-elected and assumed that Sam would ask for Joe's resignation. Sam affirmed this. He said Joe's replacement will be Johnny Riggi ... They decided that the best way would be to appoint Riggi as assistant business agent on a temporary basis—then let him take over in Sferra's absence."

"DeCavalcante repeated his main charge against Sferra—that he continually failed to keep seven 'Amico Nos' (mob members) in the union working. He claimed to have told Sferra, 'I like you, Joe, but I like our people better than you. You're just one of 30 people. And I'm not going to do an injustice to 30 people on account of you.'"

In February, 1965, the FBI reported that Gaetano "Corky" Vastola was allegedly interested in bringing employees of a New York plant into Local 242, Warehouse Industrial Union, New Brunswick, which the FBI said was controlled by Joseph "Whitney" Danzo, a friend of DeCavalcante. The FBI report on a Feb. 26 meeting says:

"Danzo arrived at the office

of DeCavalcante with some cards which he gave to Vastola to distribute among certain employees of the plant in question. Apparently the cards indicate a willingness on the part of the employees to organize . . . Whitley explained that in order to have Corky's local appear legitimate, they should first organize through an existing local, i.e. Local 242. Then after about one month, Corky can open his own office and the membership will be switched back to him, along with 'a couple of other shops in New York to make it look good.'

'25 PER CENT'

"Corky: I also said this, Sam. If this turns out to be a score, we shoot an end back here.

"Sam: Wait a minute, I like to talk about money first so there's no misunderstanding. What end do you feel Joe should get?

"Corky: Twenty five per cent for here. Because there's two guys and myself over there. That's three of us. To Joe: So you're the fourth guy.

"Sam: Do you think that's right—to forget me?

"Corky: Forget you?

"Corky: Well—that's what I told Mike, but—yeah. Let's make it five. I'll take 20 per cent.

"Joe: Me too.

"Sam: All right. Joe, you're satisfied with 20 per cent?

"Joe: Yeah, I'm satisfied.

"Sam: Now, how about the dues there? Where do the dues come in now?

"Joe: I use the dues for his books, stationery, and to set him all up.

"Corky: What are the dues a month?

"Joe: Well, you can make yours \$5, but I only have four here.

"Corky: And what is the initi-

ation fee? Ah—but I'm gonna waive the fee to set up the shop.

"Joe: Right. Then you could charge \$25, \$50 or \$75—whatever you want. Why not 10 now and anybody that comes in after 25?

"Corky: Yeah. All right.

"Sam: Well, how are you gonna make a score if you're cheap?

PACKAGE DEAL

"Corky: Well, I'm gonna make the score this way. When I sit down with the boss (management), I tell him how much it's gonna cost him in welfare, hospitalization and all that. Say a plant with 250 people will cost him \$4,000 a month—just for hospitalization. So, altogether I make a package out of it. I'll say 'It's gonna cost \$100,000 a year. Let's cut it in half and forget about it.' And walk away. I show him first what it's gonna cost—then how much I'm gonna save him by walking away."

The transcripts carry enormous detail about the life and times of Mafia men, with ample evidence that they have the ordinary problems, hopes, ambitions and peccadilloes of the average man.

There are memos referring to an earnest discussion of changing names on American Express cards so they could presumably go shopping without ever paying a bill; there were some complaints about two underlings who play golf seven days a week and "ignore the company;" there was an effort to find out whether the boss had enough clout to help get someone's son into an Eastern college; there was contract discussion regarding a budding young singer described to Sam the Plumber as a boy who could "sing better than Robert Gou-

Figures Mentioned in Once-Secret FBI Transcripts



THESE ARE some of the men whose names were mentioned in once-secret FBI transcripts obtained from nearly four years of hidden electronic bugging. From left are New Jersey mobster Willie Moretti, shot to death in a Cliffside

Park, N. J., restaurant; Thomas Dunn, now mayor of Elizabeth, N. J.; Samuel "Sam the Plumber" DeCavalcante, the central figure in the transcripts, and Rep. Cornelius Gallagher, D-N. J.

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